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Technical cooperation activities**Summary**

The present document provides an overview of technical cooperation activities implemented by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) under subprogramme 4 on technology for development and regional integration since the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development, held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on 11 and 12 February 2017. Those activities were funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary resources.

The present document focuses on examples of activities that highlight the interlinkages between the three functions of ESCWA as a research institution that produces studies aimed at supporting reforms at the public policy level, a house of expertise that provides technical guidance to policymakers, and a regional forum for consensus-building between member States on challenges they face and ways to overcome them. The present document also contains proposals on broadening the scope of technical cooperation activities undertaken by ESCWA in the field of technology for development.

The Committee on Technology for Development is invited to take note of implemented technical cooperation activities and the proposed areas of technical cooperation, and to comment thereon.

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Introduction

1. The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation is a fundamental tool for implementing the programme of work of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Technical cooperation projects are designed in accordance with member States' requests so as to meet their needs. ESCWA technical cooperation is part of broader efforts aimed at achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. Technical cooperation services provided by ESCWA are divided into the following three categories: advisory services to support countries in issues related to public policy; capacity-building workshops, study tours and fellowships; and pilot field projects in ESCWA specializations that are expected to be developed into larger projects with funding from extrabudgetary sources provided by donors. Technical advisory services complement other dimensions of support provided by the secretariat to member States, including generating knowledge on development challenges and building consensus to face them, then tackling them by providing direct support to member States.

3. The ESCWA secretariat's work under subprogramme 4 on technology for development and regional integration covers digital technology, innovation and new technologies. The present document sets out the technical cooperation activities undertaken by ESCWA since the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development, held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on 11 and 12 February 2017, including advisory services and capacity-building workshops. The present document also provides proposals for future technical cooperation activities under ESCWA subprogramme 4.

I. OVERVIEW

4. The ESCWA secretariat has implemented several advisory services and workshops in the field of technology for development, based on requests from member States. It has provided a total of 35 activities to 7 countries since the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development, including 12 advisory services, 21 national workshops and two regional workshops.

A. ADVISORY SERVICES

5. Table 1 sets out the advisory services undertaken by the ESCWA secretariat in the field of technology for development, categorized by recipient country.

TABLE 1. ADVISORY SERVICES

| Country | Number of advisory services | Area |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Jordan | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing a legal framework for the rights of way (2018); • Developing a proposed road map on digital transformation (2018); • Revising cyberlegislation with a focus on e-applications (2018). |
| Mauritania | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory report on a road map for a digital transformation strategy (2018). |
| Morocco | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory report on a road map for moving towards smart cities (2018); • Reviewing four cyberlaws (2018). |
| State of Palestine | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices to develop infrastructure for electronic certification (2017); • Reviewing a draft telecommunications law (2017). |
| Sudan | 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory report on a legal framework and proposed infrastructure for a technology transfer office (2017); • Advisory report on developing technological incubators (2017); • Selecting projects in the Raed incubator (2018); • Advisory report on an observatory for information and communications technology (ICT) indicators (2017). |
| Total | 12 | |

B. WORKSHOPS AND CAPACITY-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

6. Table 2 sets out national workshops implemented since the first session of the Committee on Technology for Development and the areas they focused on. In total, 21 workshops were implemented. In addition to those workshops, the ESCWA secretariat organized a regional workshop on [fostering public sector innovation in the Arab region](#), held in Cairo on 30 and 31 October 2017, which aimed to raise awareness among Arab decision makers on the importance of innovation and to highlight ways to foster innovation in the public sector. The secretariat also presented the new policy framework for open government in the Arab region, aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability and involving citizens in the decision-making process.

7. The ESCWA secretariat also organized a regional workshop on [innovation policies for the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) in the Arab region](#), held in Amman from 15 to 19 April 2018, in collaboration with several United Nations agencies. The workshop included sessions on the various elements of innovation policy, while distinguishing between financial and non-financial tools and their impact. Participants discussed the importance of policies in increasing cadres who are technically trained in research and development. The various globally adopted innovation indicators were also presented.

TABLE 2. NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

| Country | Number of workshops | Area |
|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Bahrain | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic diversification based on technology and innovation (Manama, 12 March 2018). |
| Jordan | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital government strategies (Amman, 6 November 2017); Road map for digital transformation (Amman, 7 November 2017); Capacity-building in the field of e-government indicators (Amman, 10 January 2018) |
| Mauritania | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-government strategies: capacity-building (Nouakchott, 11 April 2017); E-government indicators: pilot implementation of the Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index (Nouakchott, 12 April 2017); Developing technological incubators: best practices and national application (Nouakchott, 6 March 2018). |
| Morocco | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology to improve access for persons with disabilities: best practices and a national policy proposal (Rabat, 29 November 2017); E-government strategies: capacity-building (Rabat, 10 July 2018); Labour market information systems: best practices and national application (11 July 2018). |
| Sudan | 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three workshops under the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders in the Arab Region, on the impact of technology on sustainable development and e-government policies (Khartoum, 26-27 March 2017; Khartoum, 28 March 2017; and Geneina, 15 April 2018); Legal framework and proposed infrastructure for a technology transfer office (Khartoum, 17 December 2017); Framework for e-services quality (Khartoum, 30 March 2017); Developing technological incubators (Khartoum, 29 March 2017); Two workshops on technology indicators for the SDGs (Khartoum, 17 April 2018; and Khartoum, 18-19 April 2018); Cybersecurity policies: best practices and application (Khartoum, 8 November 2018); By-laws and business model for Al-Moqren technology incubator (Khartoum, 6-7 November 2018). |
| Syrian Arab Republic | 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a strategy on digital government and digital transformation (Damascus, 15 January 2019). |
| Total | 21 | |

II. PROPOSED AREAS OF TECHNICAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

8. The ESCWA secretariat proposes the following areas of technical cooperation with member States in the coming period, especially with regard to implementing the [Beirut Consensus on Technology for Development in the Arab Region](#) that was adopted by member States at the thirtieth ESCWA session (Beirut, 25-28 June 2018). The ESCWA secretariat is working on transforming technical cooperation into a more inclusive planning approach, based on developing bilateral technical cooperation frameworks with countries that so wish, to improve efficiency, increase impact and enhance transparency and accountability. It has signed several frameworks over the past two years. The secretariat proposes focusing on the following areas to provide technical cooperation services in the field of technology for development:

(a) *Policies, enabling environment and capacity-building*

- Developing strategies, policies and action plans in specialized areas such as digital government, digital transformation and open government, and moving to a digital economy at the national and institutional levels;
- Ensuring an enabling environment for the knowledge society, innovation and ICT, including infrastructure policies and access techniques, human resources, and an investment environment and financing;
- Integrating technology and innovation in national development strategies to achieve the SDGs;
- Strengthening legislative and legal frameworks for a knowledge society and ICT, especially cyberlegislation, and striving to achieve coordination between them at the regional level;
- Building capacity in all areas of innovation, entrepreneurship, ICT and related surveys.

(b) *Scientific research and innovation*

- Strengthening national innovation systems and developing legislative, procedural and regulatory infrastructure to support innovation systems;
- Enhancing scientific research and innovation in the field of new technologies, promoting their role in sustainable development, and striving to achieve regional integration in that field.

(c) *E-government, digital government and open government*

- Developing digital government services;
- Evaluating technological readiness;
- Developing open government to ensure the optimal use of technology in enhancing transparency, efficiency and participation.

(d) *Technology transfer and observatories*

- Strengthening technology transfer systems at the national and regional levels;
- Assisting in establishing technology and innovation observatories;
- Linking between supply and demand in the field of technology and innovation at the regional level;
- Following up on development indicators related to the knowledge society and innovation, the knowledge-based economy and ICT, and monitoring Arab countries' ranking in those indicators and in global reports.

(e) *Internet governance*

- Contributing to regional and international dialogues on Internet governance, and strengthening stakeholder participation at the national and regional levels.

III. CONCLUDING PROPOSALS

9. The ESCWA secretariat invites member States to take note of the implemented technical cooperation activities and the proposed areas of technical cooperation, and to follow up on the implementation of technical cooperation frameworks and update them to ensure that they contain a technology component, in line with national priorities.

10. The secretariat encourages member States to make use of its advisory services, in line with the proposed areas for technical cooperation and in accordance with national needs. In that regard, the secretariat proposes the following to member States:

- Present proposals and projects on technical cooperation, aimed at employing technology and innovation in implementing the 2030 Agenda;
- Encourage focal points and specialized bodies to submit proposals to the ESCWA secretariat on technical cooperation priorities, and to add new areas of cooperation under the framework for implementing the [Beirut Consensus on Technology for Development in the Arab Region](#).
